TL1230

AETA Accuses Canberra of Hypocrisy Over Timor

The Australia - East Timor Association (AETA) today accused the Australian Government of double standards and hypocrisy, in approving a parliamentary delegation to East Timor, 7-9 February.

"The two day Australian Parliamentary visit to East Timor 7-9 February which coincides with a meeting of Australian and Indonesian Government representatives over the Timor Gap Treaty in Bali is evidence of this double standard and hypocrisy."

"While the Government is correctly concerned with the self-determination and national integrity of Kuwait, following the military invasion by Iraq, it is not applying this principle consistently," Mr Tieman, spokesperson for AETA said.

"The Timorese, too, are seeking a negotiated settlement to the conflict with Indonesian forces in East Timor, and are prepared to participate in any genuine talks without preconditions," Mr Tieman said.

"The Australian Government, on the other hand, in preparing to share the oil spoils of the Timor Gap, is doing much to help Indonesia consolidate its control over East Timor."

"The Timor Gap Treaty, signed between Indonesia and Australia in December 1989, is itself illegal and in breach of international law."

"Australian Parliamentarians should emulate their colleagues in the United States Congress, where 223 of them signed a letter to James Baker calling on the United States to support a peace process in East Timor that could lead to negotiations without preconditions," Mr Tieman said.

"The onus is on Australia to show its bona fides on the issue of East Timor. Australia can play a significant international role in mediating a cease-fire and supporting a call for United Nations sponsored negoatiations in East Timor. Such a change of heart would be timely and welcomed in many quarters."

EAST TIMOR

Court fight on over Timor Gap treaty

SUNDAY AGE

By Michael Gordon, national politics 24/2/91

THE Federal Government will fight in the International Court of Justice a challenge by Portugal to the treaty between Australia and Indonesia to divide oil resources in the Timor Gap.

A spokesman for the Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, said yesterday that Australia would defend the treaty "very vigorously" and he was confident it would be upheld.

Portugal lodged its complaint with the court on Friday. It challenged Australia's opposition to the East Timorese people's right to self-determination.

Portugal says Australia has broken international law and acted in direct contravention of the United Nations by signing the treaty.

It covers a potentially petroleum-rich area of the Timor Sea, between northern Australia and the island of Timor.

Indonesian troops invaded East Timor in 1975, a year after Portugal announced plans to grant independence to the territory. Indonesia annexed the eastern half of the island in 1976.

The UN still recognises Portugal as the legal authority in the area and successive Portuguese governments have campaigned for its independence.

Resolutions by the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly have said Indonesia's invasion and occupation of the area was illegal and the East Timorese should be allowed self-determination.

Under the treaty, which was completed this month, Australia and Indonesia will have an exclusive exploration area in the Timor Gap. They also agreed to delineate a co-operation zone to be jointly developed.

Senator Evans has urged East Timorese resistance fighters to abandon their struggle. He said any change in the "basic constitutional arrangements that presently exist" was no longer possible.

"We have said for a very long while that we don't believe they (Portugal) have got a case," Senator Evans' spokesman said yesterday.

IN BRIEF

AGE 25/2/91

Timor Gap oil row

Portugal is to take legal action against Australia in the International Court of Justice over Canberra's Timor Gap oil agreement with Indonesia in which petroleum resources from the Timor Sea are split between the two nations. Portuguese officials claim Australia had infringed on the right to self-determination of the people of East Timor.

— Jill Jolliffe